(41)

THE

Condemnation of the Cheating POPISH PRIEST:

OR,

A brief Account of the TRYAL OF

Father Lewis,

The pretended Bishop of *Landaff*,

At the last Assizes at *Monmouth*, *March* 28.

Who lately Cheated a poor woman of 15 *l.* and got a Warrant of Attorney to Confess Judgement against her for 15 *l.* more; on pretence of Praying her Fathers Soul out of PURGATORY.

WITH

The Condemnation of another POPISH PRIEST at *Glocester*.

And through Covetousness *shall they with* feigned *words make* Merchandise *of you, whose Judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their* Damnation *sleepeth not*, 2 Pet. 2, 3.

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The CONDEMNATION of the Cheating POPISH PRIEST.

THE Two main Hinges that ſupport Popery, or the Poles on which it turns, are *Ignorance* in their Common People, and wicked *Craft* in their Prieſts, and other Guides that call themſelves *Religious*: Nor is it any difficult taſk to demonſtrate, That *every one* of thoſe Innovations wherewith they have Corrupted the ancient Faith, and wherein they differ from the Proteſtants, were at firſt hatcht, and ſtill are continued, out of ſiniſter Reſpects, either to *Pride* or *Covetouſneſs*; but I ſhall at this time inſtance but in one, as moſt pertinent to our Subject, *viz.* Their Fable of *Purgatory*, and the fraudulent devices depending thereon. What vaſt ſums of Money have been drain'd, or rather forcibly ſqueez'd out of peoples pockets on that account, for Pardons, Indulgences, Maſſes ſatisfactory, Trentals, Anniverſaries, Obits, Requiems, Dirge's Placebo's, Tapers, and ſuch-like Trumperies, by the wheadling Arts of Purſe-milking Prieſts and Romiſh Locuſts, is not ſo eaſie to be imagined, as intollerable to be born withal or endured. Nay, ſo exceſſively gree-

dy have theſe Spiritual Vultures (that prey upon departed Souls, as others on dead Carcaſſes) been in their Exactions, that they have ſtudied the baſeſt and moſt indirect Courſes in the world, to gratifie their rapacious deſires; of which we have a multitude of Examples in Hiſtory, but none more arch and fraudulent, than that notorious prank acted very lately near *Herefordſhire*, by a Ghoſtly Cheat called Father *Lewis*, and by the Popes Authority, ſtiling and pretending himſelf, The Biſhop of *Landaff* in *Wales*; concerning whom, there was in *February* laſt publiſhed a Narrative, annext to the Diſcovery of a Colledge of Jeſuits at *Come* in the ſaid County of *Hereford*, (a Book that very well deſerves the Reading;) from whom I ſhall take leave to give a ſhort Breviat of the matter of Fact, becauſe otherwiſe the Reader cannot well apprehend the following Account of that Impoſtors Tryal.

This Father *Lewis* being one of the Jeſuits of the before-mentioned Colledge at *Come*, and ſkulking up and down amongſt Popiſh Families in that Neighbourhood, the Father of a poor ſeduced woman (that was a Papiſt) happening to die about half a year ſince, the Daughter being very ignorantly devout, but of a very good nature, having oft heard the frightful ſtories of the Torments endured in Purgatory, diſmally ſet forth by the Prieſts; and fearing by his diſſolute life, that her Father might be dropt in there, (for dying however a true Roman Catholick, ſhe thought there was no fear

of

of any worſe matter) ſhe applied her ſelf to this good Father, intreating his Prayers and Aſſiſtance to deliver her dear Fathers Soul out of thoſe Tortures. He received the Propoſal with the right Wheadles of a Popiſh Trappan; and after ſeveral preparatory diſcourſes, ſaid it might be done, but would be very chargeable: For which he gave her divers notable reaſons; and after diligent counting up particulars, conceiv'd it could not be undertaken under 100 *l.* The poor woman *higgled* with him as well as ſhe could, and got ſeveral abatements; but finding his demands ſtill exceed her ability, very truely, and with tears, aſſured him, *That* 35 l. *was all that ſhe had in the world:* Whereupon at laſt, becauſe it was an Act of Charity, he would take but 30 *l.* of her; and ſo they came to a Bargain, taking not onely a Bond, but a Judgment thereupon for the money, promiſing to do the Feat in ſix weeks time, and then the money to be paid without further delay. Accordingly that time being up, he ſends for his Ghoſtly Child, and with ſolemn proteſtations, aſſur'd her, her Fathers Soul was *Infallibly in Heaven.* The woman was mightily pleas'd and overjoy'd, but Father *Lewis* not ſo; when demanding the Pence, ſhe told him, that ſhe could not poſſibly get in her money, and therefore had brought him but 10 *l.* at preſent. This ſo nettled him, that he threatned to Excommunicate her, and alſo fling her into Goal, *&c.* yet at laſt took the 10 *l.* in part, and gave time for the reſt; 5 *l.* of which ſhe made ſhift to pay ſoon after.

But

But afterwards happening to marry a Proteſtant, and he inquiring what was become of her money, after ſome importunity, ſhe declar'd the whole Intreague, and that ſhe was 15 *l.* in debt to him ſtill. The Huſband and ſome friends took pains to convince her of the abſurdity and knavery of ſuch pretences, together with the falſity of other Popiſh Doctrines: whereupon ſhe was brought over to the Proteſtant Church; and a Magiſtrate having examined her upon Oath, ſearch was made for Father *Lewis*, who by her directions was found lurking in a cunning, though now no longer ſafe, Sanctuary, contriv'd under ground in a poor Cottage, and thence committed to *Monmouth*-Goal.

And now this Lent Aſſizes there coming on, he was brought to his Tryal, being Indicted for Treaſon, for that having received orders from the pretended Authority of the See of *Rome*, he yet came over into, and continued in His Majeſties Dominions, contrary to the Statute in that caſe made and provided. There was very full and ſufficient Evidence againſt him; but 'tis ſaid, either through negligence or deſigne, ſeveral Papiſts or ſuch reputed had been returned both on the grand Inqueſt, and on the Jury of Life and Death. However, notice being given thereof to the Judge, his Lordſhip preſently diſcharged them of their ſervice, and cauſed other Gentlemen to be impannelled. Father *Lewis* made a great and long argument in endeavouring to diſprove ſome petty circumſtances in the Book that was written

ten concerning him, and alleadged that the ſame and the Evidence did differ in ſome particulars, though as to the material points of the ſtory he could not deny but they agreed; and although the Court told him that it ſignified nothing to make his objections to the Book, it being no Evidence againſt him, yet he would proceed and make an end of his tedious ſpeech to that purpoſe. And as to the Evidence that was given againſt him, he with the uſual Confidence, Impudence, and Obſtinacy of thoſe hypocritical Impoſtors, poſitively denied it with many ſolemn proteſtations, making this plea for himſelf; 1. That *the Evidence did not prove him a Prieſt, becauſe none could directly ſay that they ſaw him receive Orders from the See of* Rome. But if that ſhould be admitted, and their exerciſing prieſtly Functions, as ſaying Maſs, conſecrating the Euchariſt, taking Confeſſions, preſcribing Penances, giving Abſolutions, and the like acts, which none but a Prieſt may perform, and this at ſeveral times and places amongſt the moſt zealous and intelligent Roman Families. If theſe acts, I ſay, ſhould not be a concluding proof, then that neceſſary Law would be totally eluded, and it would be impoſſible to convict a popiſh Prieſt. The Ghoſtly Father urged this point further, inſiſting, *That if his Prieſthood were not proved, he then did appear but as a Cheat, and ſo ought not to be convicted as a Prieſt.* It ſeems he was content to be a Lay-cheat, but very loth for the honour of the

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Brotherhood to be known to be a cheat Eccleſiaſtical. He alſo ignorantly alleadged that the Act wherein he ſtood indicted was repealed by a ſucceeding Act, the penalty of which was onely fine and impriſonment: but all theſe pleas being in themſelves frivolous, and the laſt falſe, they were over-ruled by the Court, and being fairly convicted on full evidence by an impartial Jury, he received Sentence; but for the preſent Execution was ſuſpended till further order.

Another Prieſt was likewiſe Convicted at *Glouceſter*, againſt whom there was poſitive Evidence that he in his prieſtly Habits did adminiſter the Sacraments, took Confeſſions, gave Diſpenſations and Pardons, undertook to pray the Souls of perſons deceaſed out of Purgatory; but whether on cheaper or dearer terms than Father *Lewis* I cannot ſay. But that which was moſt remarkable in his Tryal, as we hear, is, that ſeveral perſons lately Romaniſts, who had taken the Oaths and ſeemed Converts, did yet deny that he was a Prieſt, and that they ever received abſolution of Sins or the Sacrament from him, though the contrary was by others ſufficiently proved. Which if ſo, we may thence judge at the reality of ſuch peoples pretences to diſown the Church of *Rome*, when at the ſame time they count the ſaving of a raſcally Prieſt from Juſtice ſuch a meritorious work, as to over-ballance and acquit them from the guilt of horrid perjury. But of theſe folks honeſty, and the aſſeverations of traiterous popiſh Prieſts, when at their Tryals or Executions they would outbrazen their guilt with pretenſions of innocence, we may take honeſt *Luther*'s advice, *Nemo eorum obteſtationibus & jaculationibus quicquam credat, nam eos Mentiri & dupliciter Mentiri Certiſſimum eſt.* Let no man be ſo weak as to believe their proteſtations and vaunts; for it is moſt certain they lye, and that moſt loudly and abominably. *Luth.* Defenſ. verb. Cœnæ, Fol. 381.

FINIS.

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